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ABSTRACT

Despite the recent attention to shared decision making, there has been little research investigating the process. This paper presents and compares three case studies describing the leadership and decision making of three shared-decision-making teams over a years. The teams--from one primary, one middle, and one high school--were set in one school district in New York State. Data were gathered through participant observation. The data suggest that teams gradually adopted a more consensual model of leadership, which occurred both through use of consensus-based decisions and special project teams. Shared decision making is a dynamic phenomenon that is susceptible to many factors and varies across teams. The data demonstrate that: (1) decision-making patterns of teams are likely to change over time; (2) individuals in leadership roles tend to participate in a disproportionately high number of decisions and discussions; (3) teams may need to go through a clarifying stage in which they decide what to decide; (4) conflict may be necessary to promote team growth, role clarification, and alignment of a teams' vision; (5) decision-making patterns can be influenced directly by training and by stability of team membership; (6) special project teams can facilitate shared decision making; (7) it takes time to develop effective shared decision-making practices; and (8) administrative support can empower decision makers. Four tables are included. (Contains 13 references). (LMI)

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"Getting Better With Practice": A Longitudinal Study of Shared Leadership

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Getting Better With Practice: A Longitudinal Study of Shared Leadership

Recent discussions about educational restructuring emphasize involvement of teachers and parents in determining schools' approaches to education of all children (e.g., Comer, 1993, Conley & Bacharach, 1990, Lange, 1993) and delineate strategies for implementing shared decision making (Bergman, 1992, Lange, 1993). Support for shared decision making as an approach to school reform derives from theory concerning facilitative power and participative decision making (e.g., Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993, Griffin, 1995, Hart, 1995, Hoy & Tarter, 1993, Mohrman, Cooke, & Mohrman, 1978, Smylie, 1992, Strike, 1993). Shared decision making's emphasis on facilitative power and shared leadership suggests that principals, team leaders, educators and parents must learn new roles (Brown, 1990, Clift, Veal, Holland, Johnson, & McCarthy, 1995, Kowalski, et al., 1992, Meyers, et al., 1995).

Despite the recent attention to shared decision making, there has been little research investigating this process. Proponents of shared decision making argue that this approach to school reform has the potential to facilitate more democratic school organization, and to create important benefits in schools (Bergman, 1992, Hart, 1995, Hoy & Tarter, 1993, Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993, Lange, 1993, Strike, 1993). Some increases in the democratic functioning of school governance have been observed in studies of shared decision making (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993, Johnson & Pajares, 1996). However, other research suggests that shared decision making has had a limited effect (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990).

It is generally acknowledged that the principal plays an important role in shared decision making (e.g. Brown, 1990, Clift, Veal, Holland, Johnson, & McCarthy, 1995, Johnson & Pajares, 1996,

Kowalski et al., 1992, Meyers et al., 1995). Research suggests that one critical issue that shared decision making must overcome is the development of a new leadership role by the principal. Principals have had difficulty sharing power (Malen & Ogawa, 1988, Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992, Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992) and change efforts have not been effective when the principal has been the sole source of leadership (Heller & Firestone, 1995). When the principal's effectiveness in shared decision making has been examined it has been suggested that efficacy could be maximized if the principal (1) used facilitative power and worked as an enabler rather than exercising authoritative power (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993, Heller & Firestone, 1995, Johnson & Ledbetter, 1993), and (2) helped to establish a vision to guide reform efforts that included a focus on teaching, learning, and innovation (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993, Heller & Firestone, 1995, Keedy & Finch, 1994, Weiss & Cambone, 1994).

Detailed descriptions of the ways in which principals and other leaders have used facilitative power or established a school vision have not been provided in this prior research. With few exceptions (e.g., Meyers et al., 1995), previous research has provided limited data concerning the leadership behaviors displayed by shared decision making team members other than the principal. Further, while few longitudinal investigations of shared decision making have been conducted, the findings from two such studies (e.g., Johnson & Pajares, 1996, Kanapel, et al., 1995) suggest that group processes in SDM teams change across years as team members become accustomed to each other, decision making conventions are developed, and as team membership changes. Since much of the existing research has not been based on longitudinal designs, it is important to examine the stability of the decision making patterns within shared decision making teams that occur across school years. In

addition to providing a longitudinal examination of decision making patterns, the present research seeks to clarify the leadership roles played by team leaders and other team members on three different shared decision making teams.

Most of the prior research on shared decision making is based on interview data rather than direct observations of teams (e.g., Griffin, 1995; Jenkins, Ronk, Schrag, Rude, & Stowitschek, 1994; Weiss, 1993; Weiss, Cambone & Wyeth, 1992). There have been some beginning efforts to collect observational data about share decision making (e.g., Johnson & Pajares, 1996), and only one prior investigation was located that used systematic analysis of verbatim transcripts of team meetings to promote an in-depth examination of leadership behaviors in shared decision making teams (Meyers, et al., 1995).

Our use of direct observation is an important methodological contribution to this area of research. Direct observation permitted a detailed consideration of the frequency of statements and decision making strategies used by principals, team leaders and other members of each shared decision making team. An additional contribution of this research is the in depth information gleaned from the combined use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of this investigation is to present and compare three case studies describing the leadership and decision making of three shared decision making teams over four years. When presenting these cases the following questions are addressed: (1) What is the frequency of statements made by principals, team leaders, educators, parents and students on three shared decision making teams? (2) What is the frequency of different types of decision making processes used by the individuals exercising leadership in each team? (3) What are the topics of the decisions made by these teams? (4) How does each teams' decision making

change across a four-year period?

Methods

Design

This research employed a longitudinal comparative case study design that contrasted the shared decision making teams from three schools in one district, specifically the district's only primary (K-2), middle (6-8), and high school (9-12). These case studies were constructed based on systematic observations and interviews over a four year period. This facilitated comparison of the three teams' functioning, all of which were influenced by the same district history and administration, organized by the same shared decision making plan, and implemented during the same four years.

Participant-observer methodology was a key feature of the design. Three participant observers each became members of one of these three shared decision making teams, attending all of their team's meetings. Each team included two researchers: one participant-observer who served as an active member of the team while observing team functioning, and one graduate research assistant who did not participate but was responsible for data collection, e.g., observing, taking notes, and tape recording. The participant observers were faculty from local universities with substantial prior experience providing service and conducting research in schools. The research assistants were enrolled in graduate programs in educational or school psychology.

Prior to and concurrent with the present data investigation, these participant-observers were members of other district-wide shared decision making teams in the target district. Their participation in the district began when the district's efforts to implement educational reform were initiated. This prolonged engagement and unique access afforded an "insider's" view of the shared

decision making and educational reform efforts implemented during the first four years of implementation.

Context and Setting

The shared decision teams described here functioned in a small school district serving roughly 3000 students from predominately white, middle class families in the Greater Capital District of New York State. The district was engaged in a five-year collaborative research endeavor with a local university examining the process and content of educational reform and its effects on all students. The data reported here were gathered as a part of the five-year project.

The educational reforms in this district were organized by New York State's New Compact for Learning (New York State Education Department, 1991) and National Goals 2000 (Kaplan, 1992). During the first year of this five-year project, the district adopted National Goals 2000 as its approach to educational reform. During the second year of this project, legislation went into effect that mandated shared decision making teams in all school buildings in New York State. This legislation was a part of New York State's New Compact for Learning, which sought to confer greater flexibility to schools in exchange for greater responsibility.

The state legislation required every district to devise a plan for membership and responsibilities for the shared decision making teams which were mandated for each school building. The membership plan in the district under study required two parents, faculty representatives, and building principal to be members of the building shared decision making team. Other constituents who could be added at the discretion of the building were staff and students. The teams' primary responsibility was improving results for all students.

During the course of this research, several recent developments within the district were important influences on the reform process. For example, a new Assistant Superintendent for Instruction was assigned responsibility for overseeing the district's Goals 2000 reforms. This administrator encouraged each building to focus its innovations around a particular theme (e.g., developmentally appropriate practices at the primary level). In addition, the district had re-organized its elementary program to better utilize classroom space and to allow programming in each building to be more age appropriate. Because the primary building consisted of a newly merged faculty from two buildings, half of the staff had not worked previously with the building principal during the first year of this investigation. It is also important to note that previous administrators (now gone from the district) had a history of centralized decision making and many projects initiated by faculty or parents never reached fruition. Similarly, faculty and parents were often consulted but then their input was seemingly ignored when decisions were made.

The training offered to shared decision making teams may have been a factor which influenced overall team functioning across years. Systematic training regarding shared decision making was not available to these teams during their first year of operation, although training had been provided previously to a few members from each team (including the Team Leader and Principal). Thus, during the first year the case studies reflect the functioning of relatively naive teams.

At the beginning of the second year, systematic training was provided separately to each team for two days off campus. During the third year training was provided at the beginning of the year to new members only, and during the fourth year of this investigation training was again provided for all members of each team in a two day workshop that was held off campus. These training workshops focused

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on approaches to shared leadership, the roles played by team members (team leader, scribe, time keeper, observer, etc.), the use of consensus from the group in making decisions, the use of data in decision making, and the use of special project teams to implement specific tasks (i.e., research and draft a new report card) for the shared decision making teams.

Overview of Data Sources

Multiple data sources were used to construct the cases and include both quantitative and qualitative data sets. The quantitative data were derived from coding verbatim transcriptions of the discussions at two meetings of each shared decision making team each year for the first three years of this research. These coded verbatim transcripts were used to address each of the research questions, first for each case study and then for the comparisons across cases.

These data were supplemented by qualitative summaries of observations of all team meetings (i.e., field notes from 33 - 41 meetings per team, total = 112 meetings), artifacts from shared decision making meetings (i.e., agenda, minutes, attendance, etc.), researcher memos reflecting key events that occurred throughout this research, and interviews with principals, team leaders, and other team members. These data were used to confirm and enrich the quantitative data.

Verbatim Transcriptions of Meetings

Selection and Development of Transcripts. All team meetings were recorded using an audio tape recorded and a conference microphone placed in the center of the table. Each team approved these taping procedure. To facilitate analysis of these data, the two attending researchers selected two representative meetings during each of the first three years of this research (one early in the year and one later in the year) for transcription and analysis (6 transcribed meetings per team, total = 18

transcriptions). In the researchers' judgment, the selected meetings were typical of their team, according to three criteria: the content (topics, and dialogue), group process (participation of team members) and attendance. To insure that comparable meetings were selected across the three teams, one of the researchers had responsibility for overseeing this process and approving the selections of meetings to be transcribed.

In order to accurately attribute statements to the correct team member, the graduate research assistant took notes during the meeting. These notes consisted of listing the initials of each speaker, in turn, as well as the first few words of each person's statement which were used to construct each transcript accurately. After the meeting, the same research assistant was responsible for overseeing the transcription of the dialogue from that meeting. The research assistants' notes about speakers and statements were used to assist in constructing each transcript.

Since the transcripts provided a verbatim report of each person's contributions to the meeting, each transcript provided information about the number of statements made by each team member at each meeting. For the purposes of this research a "statement" was defined as a line of dialogue from one person ranging in length from one to ten words.

Coding System. A coding system was developed to describe the specific decision making behaviors exercised by principals, team leaders and other team members. The coding system was developed based on theory about shared decision making (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993; Hoy & Tarter, 1993) and the events that occurred at these meetings.

Decisions were defined as an agreement reached by the team on an action to take place at the time of the meeting or some time in the future. According to this coding system, decisions could be reached

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by one or more people on the team

Four decision making processes were included in this coding system. Self authorized Decisions were defined as decisions made by just one team member. Decisions made by agreement among just two team members were called Handshake Decisions. Decisions made by Implied Consensus were defined as situations where three or more team members participated and verbally concurred, but no formal test for consensus was made. Decisions based on a formal request for input from team members were coded Test for Consensus.

Coding Reliability. Coding of the decision making strategies was conducted by two of the researchers who had participated in the team observations. Each decision was coded independently by these two raters (Primary School Team = 131 decisions; Middle School Team = 135 decisions, High School Team = 114 decisions). Inter-rater agreement was consistently at or above 88% (Primary School = 88%, Middle School = 89%, High School = 92%). After reliability was calculated, any disagreements were reviewed and discussed until the coders were able to reach agreement on all decisions for the final coded transcript used in the analyses.

Summaries of all meetings of these shared decision making teams

Field notes reflecting the content and process of decision making were developed for all of the meetings of each team for the four year period of this research (i.e., 33 - 41 meetings per team over the four years of this research; total = 112 meetings). These were based on artifacts from each meeting such as the meeting agenda, minutes and record of attendance as well as observations that were collected as follows. Graduate research assistants and participant-observers took narrative notes designed to characterize the content and process of each meeting. These observers recorded information

to reflect the topics of conversations and the involvement of principals and team leaders in discussions and decisions. After narrative observations were completed, the observers filled out a brief form summarizing the topics, decisions, and the involvement of team members. These forms were checked by the participant-observer and graduate research assistant on each team and agreement was reached on the information reported in these forms.

Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted at the end of each of the first three years of this research. At the end of the first year, interviews were conducted with the building principals, the team leader, one educator member and a parent from each team (total = 12 interviews). At the end of the second year, interviews were conducted with all members from each team (total = 32 interviews), and at the end of the third year, interviews were conducted with two educators from each team (total = 6 interviews). Interviews were conducted by university researchers, tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. During the interview, team members were asked to characterize their role on the team, their views of the strengths and weaknesses of their team, and suggestions for improving their team. They were also asked to describe their view of the major accomplishments of these teams. Excerpts from these interviews were used to clarify members' perceived roles on these teams and to supplement observation data.

Researcher Memos

Throughout this investigation the researchers recorded memos describing notable events as they occurred. These memos were recorded by the participant-observers and the graduate student observers on a regular basis throughout this research. Memos were written after each shared decision making meeting

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and at any other time that the researchers encountered significant events connected to the decision making process.

Approaches to Analysis

A first step in data analysis was to summarize each participant's involvement in team meetings. This was done by calculating, separately for each team in each of the first three years of the study, the average frequency of statements per session made by each team member and the average frequency of decision making strategies per session codes. Average frequencies per session are reported directly for the Principal, Team Leader and Researcher on each team. To facilitate the presentation of the data in tables average frequencies, per session are reported for Educators, Parents, and Students. Finally, percentage of statements and decision making strategies used by the principal, team leader and researcher, and the average percentages of these variables for educators, parents, and students were calculated and reported in the tables.

Qualitative data sources (summaries of each meeting, artifacts from team meetings, interview data and researcher memos) and the meeting transcripts themselves were examined to seek confirmation and disconfirmation of the quantitative findings that were documented in the tables.

Results

Case Study of the Primary School Shared Decision Making Team (Team #1)

The data regarding frequencies per session and percentage of statements, decisions, and decision making strategies associated with the team leader, principal, educators, and parents from the Primary School Team are reported in Table 1. These data reveal that the roles played by these team members were different and varied over time. These results are discussed below in relation to the four years of this

investigation

insert Table 1 about here

Year One: Primary School Team. This team (derived from a blended faculty as noted above) was characterized by some dissention during the first year, resulting in the principal's effort to assume control of the team during the spring semester. As a result quantitative findings in Table 1 suggest that this principal dominated team decision making in the first year.

This principal's dominance is reflected in several ways including his involvement in over three fourths of the decisions and by the fact that he made over half of the team's statements during these two meetings. In contrast, others spoke relatively little with only the team leader contributing more than 3% of the total statements (see Total Talk in Table 1). Similarly, team members were involved in substantially fewer decisions than the principal. It is noteworthy that the parents on this team rarely spoke and contributed to none of the decisions made during this first year.

Consistent with this trend, this team showed heavy reliance on leadership styles which excluded the involvement of other team members during the first year. This is evidenced by the frequency of Handshakes and Self- Authorized decisions which comprised 67% of all decisions. This approach to decision making may help to explain why the team accomplished little in the first year. It spent its early months on custodial issues (similar to the great parking lot debate noted in Johnson & Pajares, 1996) and ultimately devoted the spring meetings to developing a mission statement (see Table 2).

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insert Table 2 about here

Year 2: Primary School Team. During the second year the entire team received an extensive two day training workshop conducted off campus. This year the team leader made a concerted effort to implement many of the procedures introduced in training which actively sought team member participation in decision-making. One of the educators on this team remarked, "after training we learned to use new methods in decision making and became more productive in making our decisions. In the past everyone wouldn't give input and with new methods everyone felt they could give input and felt more comfortable."

Table 1 provides evidence indicating the nature of this shift in leadership style. For example, there was a decrease in the principal's participation in decisions and total number of statements. While the principal remained highly involved in decision making, his level of involvement decreased to about half the team's total decisions. This was paralleled by an increase in the involvement of other team members. For example, the Team Leader's participation in team decisions and total talk increased substantially. Increased involvement was also noted for educators, and parent members as well, illustrating this team's move toward increased member involvement in the decision making process. The team leader, sensitized by the training, noted in her interview: "What I felt badly about was our parents not being as knowledgeable. They were left out at times. I began to key in on them. They were just sitting there. It became more productive when we did things by consensus and asked individuals how they felt and to give their honest opinion."

The emphasis of the team's discussions during this year was on reading achievement. The team invited outside reading consultants to address and advise, provide a workshop, and help focus efforts to improve reading results.

Year 3: Primary School Team. Group membership changed for the third year as a result of some team members completing their two year commitment. This resulted in the recruitment by the building principal of two new team leaders. These two individuals had not attended the shared decision making team in prior years but received one day of training along with other new team members which emphasized a range of strategies to enhance team discussions and decisions including approaches to building consensus. One of these team leaders, referring to an end of year report, observed: "The team functioned best when it stuck to the training model and I think we feel a real responsibility to stick to it and to do things in the right order."

This training also reinforced the potential efficacy of special project teams as a vehicle to delegate some of the Building Reform Team's responsibilities and initially the building team struggled together to develop clarity about how to best use these project teams. For example, during one of the fall meetings the Principal asked: "Isn't this Special Project Team charged to go out and find ways to collect data (about children at risk) and bring it back to the team, so this team is not figuring out how to do it but the special project team is?" The team leader played an important role in helping to shape how project teams would be used by responding: "...but it is important to come back to this group and find out if that is something we want to do or not. We're assuming that is what the whole group wants to do based on one person."

During this third year there was a further decrease in the principal's involvement in decision

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making as evidenced in Table 1. Further, the new co-chairs (Table 1 includes one of these co-chairs as an educator) maintained an active level of involvement, and there was a small increase in the participation of educators that may have reflected a continuing maturation of this team. Further, while parents were less likely to contribute to the decisions and discussions during the third year, the substance of their contributions was meaningful. For example, at one meeting the Principal referred to language arts as a primary concern of the school. One of the parents asked, "When you say language arts do you refer to remedial reading?" Previously parents on this shared decision making team would not ask clarifying questions. This change in the nature of parental participation may have occurred because the principal made a concerted effort to obtain input from the parents as reflected in the following statement from the principal to parents: "When you have a question you don't know something about please ask us because sometimes nobody knows what they're talking about and I don't want you to just sit back. We really want you to be involved."

This was the first year that this team developed special project teams (as recommended during training) to look at specific issues relevant to achieving better results for students. These teams were encouraged to collect and use data to guide in decision making as one member noted: "We're supposed to come back with...it all has to be based on data...it can't be based on our conjecture..." Special project teams that were developed in this year were focused on the following topics: (1) language arts; (2) mathematics; (3) crisis intervention; (4) report cards; (5) technology, and (6) identifying children in need of additional academic resources based on testing data. As delineated in Table 2, the formation of Special Project Teams allowed the shared decision making team to accomplish more than in previous years when responsibility was not delegated in this manner

Throughout this year the team attempted to use a number of the strategies that were presented during training. For example, at one meeting which discussed crisis intervention a parent serving as observer, gave the following feedback to the team: "I think it was very good people suggesting and asking questions." The team leader agreed stating: "I think just about everybody had something to say, which is a good sign."

Perhaps one reason for the relatively high use of implied consensus decisions in this third year, was that the Team Leader would frequently ask the team for input using questions such as the following: "Does anybody have any other ideas about that?" "Does that sound right?" "Does anybody have anything to add?""How does the team feel about that?"

Year 4 Primary School Team. In the fourth year, the Primary School Building Reform team functioned more productively and smoothly. The co-chairs were now in their second year providing stability in leadership, and training was made available for the entire team. Evidence that training was effective was apparent in the consistent use of strategies such as the following: assigning a scribe, time keeper and observer; the end of each meeting was used to set the agenda for the next meeting and to critique the meeting that just occurred; and there was a consistent use of consensus building procedures that obtain input from most team members. Accomplishments during this last year include development of a new report card, a crisis intervention plan, and a summer school program for children identified as needing additional learning support.

Case Study of the Middle School Shared Decision Making Team (Team #2)

The data regarding frequencies per session and percentage of statements, decisions, and decision making strategies associated with the team leader, principal, educators, and parents on the

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middle school shared decision making team are reported in Table 3. These data reveal that the roles played by these team members were distinct and that they varied over time. These results are discussed below in relation to the four years of this investigation.

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insert Table 3 about here

Year 1. Middle School Team. During its first year the middle school team was in the process of learning to work together. While the entire team did not receive training that year, the team leader, principal and other select members had been trained to use procedures to build consensus. The team leader and principal controlled the meeting as they were each responsible for a little more than one fourth of the total number of statements made by this team.

Further support for this conclusion derives from the fact that the principal was involved in almost half of the team's decisions, and the team leader was involved in almost all of the team's decisions. In addition, the educators and parents contributed to a minority of the statements and participated in substantially fewer decisions than the principal or team leader.

In contrast to the Primary School Team, during year 1 the team leader, educators and parents on the middle school team spoke more and were involved in more decisions than the comparable members of the primary school team. While the principal of this team was less dominating than the primary school principal and allowed others to contribute to discussions and decision making, memos based on observations suggest that when the principal spoke he was controlling and team members were reluctant to adopt a conflicting point of view.

Confirming evidence of the control exerted by both the principal and the team leader is provided by the finding that they participated in significantly more handshake decisions than other team members. These decisions were typically between the principal and the team leader which excluded the participation of other team members. However, this team engaged in substantial numbers of implied consensus and test for consensus decisions which helped to encourage some participation by educators, even though parent participation was low.

The middle school team made some accomplishments during that first year reflecting its early stage of development as a shared decision making team, and it appeared to accomplish more than the primary school team. The first year accomplishments of the middle school team included developing a mission statement and determining that Study Skills would be the building focus for the next year (see Table 2).

Year 2 Middle School Team. During the second year the entire team was trained during the early fall. This reinforced the pattern of the principal contributing to fewer decisions than the team leader and it encouraged the other team members to become more involved.

The data in Table 3 suggest that there were few changes in the decision making pattern of the principal, team leader, educators and parents. However, overall there was a decrease in decisions based on consensus (Test for Consensus and Implied Consensus) along with an increase in the use of Handshake decisions which tend to exclude the involvement of many team members. While some team members still felt that the team effectively obtained input from most members (e.g., "We have been successful in getting all team members to contribute to decisions."), a number of team members were critical about this aspect of team functioning (e.g., "We didn't go around the table to check

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opinions ")

Summaries and memos indicate that when the principal spoke he still controlled the discussion, and team members were unlikely to disagree with him. For example, one team member stated "I think we leaned heavily toward our administration. I think the option of having committee input certainly was there. But, I think there was a breakdown in terms of how the committee was used."

Researcher memos and meeting summaries reveal that the team floundered during the first half of the year as it was uncertain about its role and about how to proceed. For example, one team member stated " there is confusion about the role of the Building Reform Team." Moreover, while training had focused on consensus procedures, setting the agenda for the next meeting at the end of the meeting, observer, time keeper, special project teams, story boards, etc., these strategies were generally used inconsistently, if at all. At several meetings one or two people were assigned the role of observer, but feedback was never received from these observers. In some instances time ran out. In another instance the observer had to leave before the meeting ended. Interviews revealed that some team members were uncomfortable having someone report on observations of team process.

One aspect from training was clearly implemented during the spring semester when the team appeared to regain its focus. At that time the team developed two special project teams. One was focused on technology with the responsibility of developing suggestions regarding curriculum and staffing in this area. The other special project team was focused on reading and language arts with the responsibility of assessing performance in this area and developing suggestions for improved curriculum and instruction. This allowed for some productivity on the part of the shared decision making team which was dependent on these special project teams for direction.

For the remainder of the year, the primary role of the middle school shared decision making team was to receive reports from these two teams. While the shared decision making team now had the capability of working on some important goals, memos and meeting summaries suggest that this team attempted to shift responsibility from the shared decision making team to the special project teams. Nevertheless, members felt they were making progress as evidenced by an educator's observation during an interview: "We learned we had power based on the document produced by the technology special project team. Nobody got everything they wanted but everybody got some of what they wanted. At the board meeting I was surprised that... there seemed to be support for what we were doing."

Year 3 Middle School Team. Only new members were trained this year and the team continued to do an inconsistent job of implementing strategies learned during training. Further, the pattern of having the special project teams report as the major focus of the meeting continued. Data reflecting the process of team meetings reported in Table 3 illustrate that this team changed substantially during this year and this is supported by field notes and interviews as noted below.

While the principal continued to be involved in a substantial number of team decisions and statements, the team leader spoke substantially less while being involved in almost every decision. At the same time, while educators and parents maintained or increased the percentage of statements that they made during team discussions, the educators showed a sharp decrease in participation in team decisions. Further there was a dramatic reduction in the number of decisions made (from 28.5 per session in year two to 8.5 per session in year three).

These findings for the team in year three were associated with a key event as reflected in the transcripts, meeting summaries and researcher memos. A serious conflict emerged on this team which was

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related to the technology team. This team recommended a new staff member to teach technology. The principal appeared to be strongly opposed to this suggestion. This led to contentious meetings in which the principal and one or two key members from the special project team dominated the discussions.

Importantly, this was the first occasion when team members overtly expressed disagreement with the principal. The principal stated at one of the meetings: "I guess what I'm concerned about is whether we need a half time person. Did anybody on the committee talk to people about what our outcomes were? I don't think this offers a whole lot of options. did we look at other sources as far as where a recommendation would be?" The educator replied: "We did, we looked at a five week course. We were trying to find ways that it would fit into the schedule. this is our best recommendation. we thought this was responsible...." The Principal stated: "It doesn't make sense if you're going to look at what outcomes are you work backwards from there. Not going in and saying well if we get ten weeks we'll fit it." Educator" But (we) surveyed other schools and found it was usually a ten to twenty week block and we figured ten being fiscally responsible we would not ask for a full time person. "

Further, the special project team was angry at the middle school shared decision making team because of the lack of clear guidelines for the special project team. It was unclear where decision making power rested and it was unclear what power these teams had to make decisions.

This led to much discussion and clarification of roles. The conflict also led to input from the principal that provided a vehicle for the special project team to make a realistic recommendation for hiring a new staff person in technology. By the end of the year a decision was reached by the district to approve a proposal from this shared decision making team (and its special project team) to hire a new staff person. This conflict and its relatively successful resolution may have been a key turning

point in this team's development as seen during the next year

Year 4 Middle School Team During the fourth year the entire team received training together This, in conjunction with new team leaders and the team's successful experiences with conflict resolution in year three, were followed by more consistent use of procedures from training This team was now characterized by making decisions based on input from most of the team members It clearly used a range of strategies from training such as observation, time keeper, input from all members, etc Further, while special project teams continued, they were not the sole focus as this team began to address substantive issues affecting the entire school

For example, the team worked to develop approaches to facilitate the teaching of reading comprehension skills across the curriculum to supplement the work done by a language arts special project team To do this the team examined data about poor performance in comprehension, discussed potential causes based on teacher observations, invited a speaker in to discuss strategies, and worked to compile a list of such strategies to be disseminated school-wide

Case Study of the High School Shared Decision Making Team (Team #1)

The data regarding frequencies of statements, decisions, and decision making strategies associated with the team leader, principal, educators, parents and students are reported in Table 4 These data reveal that leadership roles played by each type of team member were different Further, this table illustrates that this team's functioning changed across the four years of this investigation These results are discussed below in relation to the four years of this investigation

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Insert Table 4 about here

Year 1 High School Team Table 4 shows that during the first year the principal and team leader were involved in a substantial percentage of this team's decisions (79% and 70% respectively). However, participation in decision making was shared by all members. Group composition may have been a factor influencing this good distribution of decision making across team members, since this team had fewer members and teachers, with the addition of student members. However, while educators and parents contributed substantially to decisions they made a relatively small number of the team's statements (i.e., Total Talk = 5% and 4% respectively). This team was relatively productive during its first year as it developed a mission statement and a code of conduct for students and teachers.

Year 2 High School Team During the second year there was an over-all change in the pattern of decisions displayed by this team. There was a substantial decrease in the number of decisions due, in part, to the shift in focus to special project teams in Earth Science and Global Studies. This decrease in total decisions was accounted for by the dramatic reduction in implied consensus decisions (from 70% to 23%). As a result the emphasis on handshakes and self authorized decisions became more prominent (note in Table 4 that the percentage of handshakes and self authorized decisions increased while the frequency per session remained similar).

Consistent with the above observations, during this year parent and student participation decreased. This decrease and the team's increased use of handshakes and self authorized decisions may have occurred as a result of the shift in focus to special project teams as the vehicle for initiating

decisions. Nevertheless, this change in team functioning was a concern to some team members. A high school student noting this change in the team observed: "It should be made certain that people can speak their minds. I feel the parents and the students did not do it this year." The team leader responded to this issue by speculating on the potential importance of training: "I would like to make sure that we update the training. I think that it is important for the members that are continuing (on the team) to be refreshed. I think it is easy to fall back into old patterns."

The high school team's use of special project teams to accomplish educational reform goals during this year paralleled, in many ways, the middle school's use of such teams. However, an important distinction was that the high school shared decision making team may have engaged in more meaningful discussions about the substance of school reform when reports were made by the special project teams. The work of these special project teams resulted in two interventions. In global studies, the ninth grade teachers moved to 10th grade with their students and in earth science students who were at risk for failing were identified with extra support provided by teachers and parents.

One factor that may have related to the drop in participation by parents was the team's discussions about the letter that would be sent to parents of students at risk of failing earth science. The initial versions of these letters were not sufficiently supportive of parents. However, input from team members did result in important improvements in these letters so that they were more acceptable to parents.

Year 3: High School Team. In the third year two new co-chairs were selected and the district hired an interim principal to replace the former principal who was now serving in an administrative position in the district. The position was filled with a new principal in January. This change in

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leadership had dramatic effects on this team. Table 4 reveals that there were significant decreases in the principals' participation in discussions and decisions. At the same time there was a corresponding increase in the participation of educators and students in total decisions and total talk, but parent participation remained low.

The pattern of team meetings remained similar with special project teams making reports that were discussed. As a result, the total number of decisions remained low, reflected particularly by a small number of decisions based on consensus and a relatively high percentage of handshakes and self authorized decisions. However, unstable leadership led to lack of clarity regarding team focus and less productive outcomes associated with the substance of the team's meetings. As a result, there was no evaluation of the interventions developed through the global studies team and there was no effort to revise the intervention developed by the earth science team when an evaluation revealed no improvement in student performance. In addition, during this third year, the high school team studied options for alternative scheduling modes (see Table 2).

Year 4. High School Team. The fourth year provided stabilization for the High School Team as the new Principal was now in his second year and the co-chairs had remained in place from the previous year. There were now three parents and three students. The three parents, one student and one educator were new to the team. Although there were fewer distractions, lots of relearning had to occur to re-establish group norms that were less susceptible to individual personality differences. There was an increase in use of implied consensus decisions and parents became more active in team discussions. The team's renewed sense of purpose resulted in the development of a new Earth Science special project team to reinstitute a revised program for students at risk of failure. The team also examined the sequencing

of science courses needed to be optimally beneficial to the students

Discussion

So, what is the answer to the question "Are shared decision making teams getting better with practice?" These data suggest that the answer is complex. As the teams in this research got better they adopted a more consensual model of leadership. This occurred both through use of consensus based decisions and through the increasing prominence of special project teams.

People learning to share power embark on an ambiguous and often mistake-filled journey. The teams that we observed muddled through as problems were identified, goals set, data collected and analyzed, and decisions made that affected children, families and educators. Over time, as these team members practiced working together, they developed the potential to become democratic, constructive and effective.

Researchers and practitioners have referred to "shared decision making" as if it were one thing (Bergman, 1992; Weiss, 1993). Our longitudinal investigation suggests that shared decision making skills do not constitute a unitary attribute that once acquired, is automatically institutionalized and implemented effectively. Instead, shared decision making is a dynamic phenomenon that is susceptible to the team's vision, style, conflict, initiative, time, training, administrative support, rotation of its membership and so forth.

Nor is shared decision making necessarily the same across teams. Instead, the results of this research indicate that there is dramatic variation in implementation and this confirms some prior findings (Meyers, et. al., 1995). These data make clear that there are significant individual differences among shared decision making teams. Those attempting to reform education need to be aware

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of these differences and their impact on member contributions and team efficacy

Each school team in this study appeared to cycle through stages of development while learning to share leadership, make decisions and set policies. As in all stage paradigms, there are periods of equilibrium and disequilibrium that promote growth, confusion, appraisal and renewal. Four critical issues have emerged as factors in the developmental journey of each shared decision making team. It is likely that these factors, and/or interactions between them, led to growth and change, and these are discussed below in relationship to the findings from this investigation: deciding what to decide (i.e., clarification of values and school vision), conflict, training and team stability.

Deciding What to Decide

It may be important for shared decision making teams to use a clarifying process to determine what they value (Johnson & Pajares, 1996). The time spent working through issues and prioritizing areas of concern was common to the shared decision making teams in this study. The primary team spent the better part of a semester debating the distribution of toilet paper and paper towels and other custodial matters before they were able to address substantive issues and ultimately draft a mission statement. The Middle School floundered during the first half of its second year because members felt uncertain about the role of the shared decision making team itself and was unable to reach consensus about its purpose. The high school shared decision making team was relatively quick to develop a focus. As a result, it readily developed a mission statement and action plan in the first year and developed productive special project teams during the second year. Unfortunately, the vision and focus for this team became less clear in year three due to the changes in leadership. However, this was followed by the emergence of a renewed sense of clarity in year four. Each team had to wrestle with

uncertainty and ambivalence about its role and mission while establishing an atmosphere of trust and a common vision. Once each team was able to gain a sense of direction and, feel secure in purpose it could move forward. The findings from the high school suggest that it may be necessary to go through a clarifying stage (deciding what to decide) periodically, especially as teams rotate membership (see stability section below).

Conflict

Periods of conflict were particularly relevant to the development of the primary and middle school teams and these phases of dissention served as both barriers and facilitators of team functioning. At first the primary team was stalled in its efforts by tensions that emanated from role ambiguity and conflict between the principal, the team leader and educators. This state of conflict persisted well into the second year as numerous participant researcher memos and interviews testify.

Frequently, after meetings, team members would wait for the principal to leave to safely vent their distrust of the shared decision making process feeling the principal did not value their input and because he was such a strong presence at the meetings (see table 1). The principal and the team leader/educators had to renegotiate their roles and concomitant power even if it took many months to wade through seemingly superficial debates. By the third year, new boundaries and status had been established. The team's composition had changed, the faculty was by now more familiar with its administrator and moderately successful attempts to implement training strategies all conspired to constructively move the team forward. The team was now clearer about its vision for the school (i.e., deciding what to decide) and set up 6 special project teams to address consensually decided academic goals (see Table 4).

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During the first two years, the middle school was ostensibly making modest accomplishments as it developed a mission, established a focus for shared decision making and established two special project teams. However, interviews and memos revealed dissention brewing behind the scenes (e.g., educators confiding to interviewers that they were concerned about the lack of real input in the shared decision making process and that they were reluctant to disagree with the principal). During the third year, as noted above, disagreement became public and the controversy surrounding the decision to hire a new faculty person in technology created a difficult series of meetings. However, this led to the team's examination of its values and vision for the school resulting ultimately in a new faculty position in technology, and this was followed by much more effective functioning in the fourth year.

Conflict may slow the progress of a shared decision making team in the short run, but as evidenced by these teams (especially the primary and middle school teams), meaningful products were realized in the end (see Table 4). Conflict may indeed be a necessary component of effective group decision making (Gutkin and Nemith, in press).

Training

The sentiments of the primary team leader at a year three team meeting express a feeling common to participants who enjoyed the structure and guidance provided by the systematic district wide training. "In the end of year report from last year, one of the outcomes was that the team functions the best when it stuck to the training model and I think that we feel a responsibility to stick to it and do things in the right order." However, "...doing things in the right order..." may hint at a potential liability of training: that teams will proceed with a rote-like adherence to the training doctrine, without critical analysis. In some cases observed meetings reflected a change from contentious and

confused to so comfortable that updating reports from special project teams (with few substantial questions about the work and progress of these teams) was the sole focus of some agendas

Nevertheless, training can be an important factor in effective team decision making (Mevers, et al., 1995, Weiss, 1993). The primary school team responded to the district wide training by systematically implementing new roles and procedures. Notable improvements in its facilitative styles were observed during year two including (1) decreased involvement of the principal, (2) increased participation in decisions by team members, and (3) a shift in the decision making pattern of the team in which there was a decrease in the use of Handshakes and Self Authorized decisions along with a corresponding increase in decisions based on consensus

During the second year, the middle school and high school shared decision making teams formed special project teams, as recommended by the training, to carry out specific educational reform tasks for the building planning team. Given this new structure there was a reduction in decisions for the middle and high school teams as most decisions were made by the special project teams. Instead, the shared decision making teams spent considerable time receiving special project team reports. Thus, in year two, a high percentage of decisions were procedural and were made using handshakes and self authorized strategies. A similar pattern occurred for the primary school team in its third year. The shared decision making teams used fewer consensus based decision making strategies when they began to use special project teams. However, our data suggest that special project teams may play a pivotal role in facilitating constructive and consensual decision making because of the involvement of larger numbers of people in the decision making process.

Further evidence for the impact of training has been observed in all teams over time as during

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the fourth year each of the teams implement many of the procedures from training including the use of formal approaches to polling members for their input to decision making, using team members to observe team process and provide feedback, setting the agenda for the next meeting at the end of each meeting, using a scribe and time keeper, etc

The skills and recommendations from training sparked each team to periods of productivity Overall the present data support the provision of training to all stakeholders involved in shared decision making

Stability

Team stability is another variable that had an impact on the functioning of each team With each rotation of educators, parents and team leader and when there was a change in principalship, the team experienced periods of uncertainty as it had to reestablish roles and modes of operating

On the primary team, the principal was new to half of the faculty during the first year of this investigation This, in combination with team leader and parent changes in year two, may have served as a barrier to productivity In the middle school's third year, when conflict emerged, there was a new team leader and some new educators on the team The high school experienced a serious shake up in year three when it lost its principal of long standing, gained and interim principal and finally a new principal, and elected two new team leaders As a result, this year saw a lack of clarity in focus which caused the team to experience a set back

Conclusions

The findings from this research are significant because they illustrate the efficacy of a longitudinal design when studying leadership in shared decision making The use of this design along

with systematic observations and interviews helped to demonstrate that (1) decision making patterns of teams are likely to change over time, (2) individuals in leadership roles (e.g., principals and team leaders) tend to participate in a disproportionately high number of decisions and discussions on shared decision making teams, (3) teams may need to go through a clarifying stage in which they decide what to decide, (4) conflict may be necessary to promote team growth, role clarification, and delineation of a team's vision, (5) decision making patterns can be influenced directly by training and by stability of team membership, (6) special project teams can facilitate shared decision making, (7) it takes time to develop effective shared decision making practices, and (8) administrative support can empower decision makers.

Our findings suggest that educators who do not use a longitudinal perspective may reach spurious conclusions that are critical of shared decision making. Shared decision making takes time, patience and nurturing. In this district, the superintendent occasionally bemoans how slow this process is; she is a person of action who wants to see "results for kids". Four years is a long time, but this district has learned to respect shared decision making, and has used this approach to genuinely change school culture by involving teachers, parents, students, and community members in meaningful school reform.

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Table 1
Primary School Shared Decision Making Team
Average Frequency Per Session and Percent of Decision Making Strategies
Across Three Years

	Principal		TL		Educators		Parents		Researcher		Total	
Year 1	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
TC	1	50	1 5	75	0 06	3	0	0	0	0	2	10
IC	4	89	3 5	78	1	22	0	0	0	0	4 5	23
HS	7	88	3	38	0 75	9	0	0	0	0	8	40
SA	4 5	82	1	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 5	27
TD	16 5	83	9	45	1 8	9	0	0	0	0	20	
TT	367	58	60	10	22 2	3	4 3	0 5	17	3	629 5	
Year 2												
TC	2	57	3 5	100	1 1	36	1	29	0	0	3 5	12
IC	10	59	13 5	79	3 6	24	2 3	14	6	35	17	57
HS	3 5	58	4 5	75	0 6	13	0 8	12	0 5	8	6	20
SA	1	29	2	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 5	11
TD	16 5	55	23 5	78	5 3	21	3 5	11 5	6 5	22	30	
TT	286	27	289	27	59 8	6	32 3	3	81	8	1063	
Year 3												
TC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IC	4	53	6 5	87	2 8	33	0 7	9	1	13	7 5	52
HS	1 5	27	2 5	45	1 1	21	0 3	6	1	18	5 5	38
SA	0 5	33	0 5	33	0 1	7	0	0	0	0	1 5	10
TD	6	41	9 5	66	4	26	1	7	2	14	14 5	
TT	330	34	206	21	78 7	7	21 3	2	25	3	979	

Y1 Y2 Y3 = Years 1, 2, & 3. TC = Test for Consensus. IC = Implied Consensus. HS = Handshake
SA = Self Authorized Decision. TD = Total Decisions. TT (Total Talk) = Times of dialogue per session. TL = Team Leader. Note that all frequencies are average per session and all data for teachers, parents and students are average scores for these participants

TABLE 2

Summary of Topics Across Four Years

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Team One	13 Meetings	10 Meetings	10 Meetings	5 Meetings
Fall	Organizational structure Need for a mission statement Custodial concerns Developmentally appropriate practice	Team Training Scheduled Goals & Responsibility of BPT Constituencies Establish team meeting dates Staff Day Presentation	Team focus & objectives Training for new members Language Arts SPT formed Developmental SPT formed DRP Scores	SPT Reports: Developmental, Language Arts, Math, Report Card Crisis Intervention Technology Newsletter to Parents
Winter	Group process Role of team & Team focus concerns	Reading Recovery Grant Focus on Language Arts Evaluated reading scores	Develop Math SPT Language Arts SPT Developmental SPT Student of the Week	Special Project Team Reports Math, Developmental, Report Card Language Arts, Technology Crisis Intervention
Spring	Team organization minutes agenda Need for team training Budgetary concerns Mission statement developed	Reading continues as focus Trimester grading State Report Card Group process evaluation	Reporting from SPT's Student of the week Develop Report Card SPT Architectural report Crisis Intervention SPT	
Team Two	**Year One**	**Year Two**	**Year Three**	**Year Four**
Fall	9 meetings Team did not meet until late November	14 Meetings Training Discussed Prioritize goals Study Skills SPT Participation & SPT	11 Meetings Role of BPT & Team mbrs SPT reports -rdg, tech Language Arts Survey Results	7 Meetings Charge for Technology SPT Team Training
Winter	Mission Statement edited and finalized Building initiative	Student Achievement Summer School Alternatives Reading & Technology Goals 2000	Tech SPT rec new faculty Role of BPT Revised charge for Tech SPT	BPT addressed DRP Technology team updates
Spring	Initiatives survey developed and administered Team agreed to use survey results as focus New team members	Special PT Reports Language Arts Report Goal 6 report Discipline Committee Membership	Membership SPT reports New Initiatives Roles	

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

Summary of Topics Across Four Years

Team Three	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
	7 meetings	10 Meetings	9 Meetings	7 Meetings
Fall	Organizational structure Standards for Student conduct	Team Training Organization DRP, Regents & RCT	SPT Reports- Earth Science Global Studies Scheduling	Review of roles and training Student Achievement Science Regents Attendance & Accountability
Winter	Discussion of standards Group process consultant	Data concerning DRP Regents & RCT reviewed Group Process Evaluation	Scheduling SPT Attendance & Discipline Regents	Scheduling SPT report Science Sequence Attendance Group Processing Membership
Spring	Emphasis on agenda, membership, goals Team agrees to focus on Goals 2000 & Developing a means to assess learning outcomes	Membership SPT reports- Global Studies & Earth Science Goals for next year SUNY Research report Scheduling	Block Scheduling	

Table 3
Middle School Shared Decision Making Team
Average Frequency Per Session and Percent of Decision Making Strategies
Across Three Years

	Principal		TL		Educators		Parents		Researcher		Total	
Year 1	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
TC	0 5	10	4 5	90	0 3	5	0 3	5	0 5	10	5	16
IC	7 5	56	12 5	93	4 2	29	1 3	8	2	15	13 5	44
HS	4 5	56	7 5	94	0 6	8	0 3	3	0 5	6	8	26
SA	1	25	2 5	63	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	13
TD	13 5	44	27	89	5 2	17	2	5	3	10	30 5	
TT	468	30	442	28	90 2	6	24 3	1	40 5	3	1573	
Year 2												
TC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IC	5	48	9 5	91	2 4	23	1 3	11	1 5	14	10 5	37
HS	4 5	36	11	88	0 9	6	0 3	2	1	8	12 5	44
SA	1 5	27	3 5	64	0	0	0 3	4 5	0	0	5 5	19
TD	11	39	24	84	3 3	15	2	6	2 5	9	28 5	
TT	116	28	125 5	30	16 6	4	5	1	15	4	417	
Year 3												
TC	1	100	1	100	0 6	55	0	0	0 5	50	1	12
IC	2	67	3	100	0 9	32	1	25	0	0	3	35
HS	0 5	33	1 5	100	0	0	0	0	1	67	1 5	18
SA	0	0	2 5	83	0 06	2	0	0	0	0	3	35
TD	3 5	41	8	94	1 5	4	1	11	1 5	18	8 5	
TT	432	39	199	18	49	4	48	5	27 5	3	1101	

Y1, Y2, Y3 = Years 1, 2, & 3. TC = Test for Consensus, IC = Implied Consensus, HS = Handshake
SA = Self Authorized Decision, TD = Total Decisions, TT = Total Talk) = lines of dialogue per session. TL = Team Leader. Note that all frequencies are average per session and all data for teachers, parents and students are average scores for those participants

Table 4
High School Shared Decision Making Team
Average Frequency Per Session and Percent of Decision Making Strategies and Total Talk
Across Three Years

	Principals		Team Leader		Educators		Parents		Students		Researcher		Total	
Y1	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
TC	1 5	50	1 5	50	0 9	25	1	33	1 5	50	0	0	3	9
IC	21	89	18	77	8 3	34	7 5	32	7 3	31	11 5	49	23 5	70
HS	2	67	2 5	83	0 1	2	0 3	9	0 3	9	0	0	3	9
SA	2	50	1 5	38	0 1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	12
TD	26 5	79	23 5	70	9 4	27	8 8	26	9	27	11 5	34	33 5	
TT	697	34	301	15	108	5	80	4	154	8	113	5	2075	
Y2														
TC	0 5	33	1 5	100	0	0	0 3	17	0	0	0	0	1 5	12
IC	2 5	83	2	67	1 4	46	0 3	9	0	0	0	0	3	23
HS	2	67	1	33	0 4	8	0 3	9	0 3	9	1	33	3	23
SA	4	73	1	18	0 2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 5	42
TD	9	69	5 5	42	2	14	1	6	0 3	2	1	8	13	
TT	427	36	190	16	150	11	19	2	49	4	163	7	1185	
Y3														
TC	0	0	0	0	0 7	100	0	0	0 3	50	0 5	100	0 5	7
IC	0 5	25	0 5	25	1 3	50	0 3	13	0 5	25	0 5	25	2	29
HS	1	50	0 5	25	0 7	25	0 3	13	0 5	25	0	0	2	29
SA	0	0	2	80	0	0	0	0	0 3	10	0	0	2 5	35
TD	1 5	21	3	43	2 7	38	0 5	7	1 5	22	1	14	7	
TT	256	21	275	23	171	14	37 8	3	113	9	117	10	1206	

Y1, Y2, Y3 = Years 1, 2, & 3. TC = Test for Consensus, IC = Implied Consensus, HS = Handshake, SA = Self Authorized Decision, TD = Total Decisions, TT (Total Talk) = lines of dialogue per session. Note that all frequencies are average per session and all data for teachers, parents and students are average scores for those participants.